



County of San Diego, Planning & Development Services  
**BASEMENT/ STORY/ HEIGHT  
DEFINITIONS**  
**ZONING DIVISION**

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There may not be adequate information provided to determine compliance with the stories or height limit. On the plot plan, show the lowest and the highest points in elevation (grade) within a 5 foot perimeter of the structure. (See definition attached).

**BASEMENT:** The lowest floor would be allowed only if it is able to qualify as a basement rather than a story. The plans must show the points where the distance from the finished floor level of the second level (the level above the “basement”) to the adjacent ground surface is exactly 6 feet. In order for the necessary determination to be made you must provide total measurements of the total perimeter of the lowest floor broken down into that portion greater than 6 feet above adjacent grade, and that portion below adjacent grade. Please include all lists of distances and the complete tabulation, so that the accuracy may be verified. Please review the included definition of a “story”.

**CRAWL SPACE:** Any unfinished accessible space, located below the first floor of a structure, which has non-excavated, natural grade with no slab; normally enclosed by a foundation wall which is intended to provide sufficient access to otherwise concealed ductwork, piping or wiring. Any such area that is designated, arranged or built as to be used for business, storage, or habitation shall not be considered crawl space and shall be counted as storage area and/or habitable space and shall be designed to meet all requirements of storage areas or habitable space.

**STORY:** That portion of a building included between the upper surface of any floor and the upper surface of the floor next above, except that the topmost story shall be that portion of a building included between the upper surface of the topmost floor and the ceiling or roof above (see “Attic Story” and “Crawl Space”). The maximum height of a story between floors shall be 14 feet. If the finished floor level directly above a basement, cellar, or unused under-floor space is more than 6 feet above the adjacent elevation for more than 50 percent of the total perimeter or is more than 12 feet above the adjacent elevation at any point, such basement, cellar or unused under-floor space shall be considered as a story. The total perimeter shall be measured along the outer limits of the area of the floor level in question. The adjacent elevation shall be grade as defined herein but shall not include fill material that has been mounded or placed for landscaping, thermal insulation, sound attenuation or for any other purpose if such mounding or placement would allow additional floor levels or building heights greater than otherwise permitted.

**HEIGHT MEASUREMENTS:** For height measurement, show the elevations the distance from the lowest point of the adjacent grade to the mid-point of the highest ridge of a pitched or hipped roof, to the highest point of the coping of a flat roof, or to the deck line of a mansard roof.

**GRADE:** For the purpose of determining building height and calculating the number of stories, grade is the lowest point of elevation of the finished surface of the ground, paving or sidewalk within the area between the building and the property line, or when the property line is more than 5 feet from the building, between the building and a line 5 feet from the building.

**ATTIC STORY:** Any story situated wholly or partly in the roof, so designated, arranged or built as to be used for business, storage, or habitation. An attic story shall be counted as a story.

**MEZZANINE OR MEZZANINE FLOOR:** An intermediate floor placed in any story or room. When the total area of any such Mezzanine Floor exceeds 33-1/3 percent of the total floor area in that room, it shall be considered as constituting an additional story. The clear height above or below a Mezzanine Floor construction shall be not less than 7 feet. An enclosed Mezzanine shall be counted as a story.